

God's Plan for a New Year

Jeremiah 29:4-14

I preached this passage a few years ago, but today I wanted to revisit it with the New Year in mind. I felt this passage is very hope-giving in what seems to be a hopeless world. Here is the Background: The prophet Jeremiah is writing a letter to the people of Judah that are in captivity. The Babylonians captured Judah in 597 BC. God told Habakkuk that this would happen, now Jeremiah is living through this in his day. Jeremiah is reminding those taken into captivity that God has not forgotten them! In fact if you don't hear me say anything else today, remember that God has not forgotten you and has a plan for you in 2024! Even in the worst of circumstances that we could have experienced in 2023, God has a plan for us in 2024 for our good and His glory! This passage is to encourage a suffering people that God is faithful.

What was God encouraging the people of Judah to do?

Become Planted for God's Glory (Jeremiah 29:4-9) God was telling His people thrive where are put! Bloom where you are planted! It is going to be 70 years before you can come back to Israel! How should we be planted for God's glory?

- a. Prepare for the future (vv.5-6) Instead of worrying about tomorrow, live today for Christ! Raise families who live for Christ!
- b. Participate in bettering the foundation (v.7) Ask not what can the church do for me, but ask what can I do for the church and God's Kingdom?
- c. Push away from false teaching (vv.8-9) The false teachers were trying to tell God's people that it was only going to be a short time that they would be in suffering. God said, "don't listen to them." (Some of the largest churches are built on the false teaching that suffering can be avoided through enough faith.)

Becoming planted for God's glory looks like Colossians 3:23-24, which states: "*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*"

I believe the same insight that was given to the people of Judah is good for us today in this New Year. Prepare for the future, (raise families to live for Christ). Better the foundation of the city, be a good steward of our town, state, church, nation, homes. How? Share the gospel and live the gospel! Always stay away from false teaching. Teaching that says that believers will not suffer. Teaching that talks little about the glory and majesty of Christ. Push away from teaching that doesn't teach sacrifice and repentance. We must live for a big God, not a god of the people's preference!

Believe in God's Promises (Jeremiah 29:10-11) Even though it wasn't going to be 70 years until they could cling to the dirt of Israel, God wanted them to know that even in captivity, He

was working all things for their good and His glory! We have to hold on to this. But pastor, how does death and destruction bring good to us and glory to God? We may never know on this side of eternity, but we do know that God is good! Do not see this passage as a universal sign that believers will not experience suffering. We will suffer in some capacity until Christ's return. We can glean from this passage that God has an ultimate plan that is rigged for our good and His glory! He is sovereign, He cares about you, so live life with a white hot passion for the glory of Jesus Christ in all things that you do! In the middle of suffering we must believe that God has great plans for us! We must cling to this! For 2024, believe God's promises

Boldly Pursue God's Presence (Jeremiah 29:12-14) There are only two paths that we can this New Year 1) Run away from God and try to solve your problems yourself (sower and the seed), or 2) Run to God who is bigger than your problems. To be in the presence of almighty God is our goal! The goal is not our comfort, our health, or our financial stability. The goal is Christ! The goal is to make much of Christ! To be satisfied in Christ, to long for Christ! To seek God with a yearning and longing to make much of Him! This must be our pursuit in 2024! Three rewards of pursuing God for us this New Year!

- a. He will hear us. (v.12)
- b. He will be found by those who seek Him. (v.13)
- c. He will deliver us from eternal suffering, and give us eternal satisfaction. (v.14)

How can I pursue God's presence in this New Year? The first part of James 4:8 states: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you..." 1. Spend time studying the Bible. Make a reading plan and meditate on it. Being seriously engaged in God's Word will always draw you closer to God. 2. Pray. Prayer will draw you closer to God. 3. Witness. Philemon 1:6 "and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ." When we do something that takes total dependence upon Christ such as prayer and proclaiming Christ, we see the hand of God that encourages us to see it again and again. Witnessing encompasses both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. 4. Worship. You will give time what you believe and love! Love God through worship privately and publically! If you are not publically worshipping Christ, there is a likelihood that you are not privately giving Him worth either.

May you hear His call today to live for Him in 2024! He desires that you find rest in Him, not in your own pleasures. Live for Christ! *"He who does not long to know more of Christ, knows nothing of Him yet."* C.H. Spurgeon